THE UNITED IRISHWOMEN

THEIR PLACE, WORK AND IDEALS

BY

HORACE PLUNKETT
ELLICE PILKINGTON
AND
GEORGE RUSSELL ("Æ")

WITH A PREFACE
BY THE REV. T. A. FINLAY

DUBLIN: MAUNSEL & COMPANY, LTD
96 MIDDLE ABBEY STREET

SECOND EDITION

334
P74u2

PREFACE

Ireland has had to wait long for the conditions which would permit her to turn to full account for her happiness the materials of wealth and the resources of mind which she possesses. But the opportunity seems to have come at last. The storms of her political life are subsiding; the struggle for the land is ending in assured possession by the occupier; the barriers which blocked her advance in manufacturing industry have been broken down. She has, it is true, lost heavily in population; but her vitality is unimpaired; the branches of the tree have been lopped off mercilessly, but the trunk is sound, and, given freedom of air and sunlight, it may clothe itself with fresh shoots and recover its richness of life.

To what extent it will do so depends entirely on the stimulus and the direction given to the forces within it. What Ireland shall become will be determined by what her people do for themselves. Government has much power to hinder, but small power to help, the energies of a nation; it may second national effort, but cannot create it.

It is fortunate that at this juncture Ireland has among her public men one whose life-work it has been to impress these truths upon his countrymen, and it is further to the good fortune of Ireland that his countrymen have taken his teaching to heart, and, under his guidance, have striven with success to apply it. Sir Horace Plunkett is, at the moment, the foremost living apostle of the gospel of self-help in rural life. He has studied it in its

r 38 003

multiform developments at home and abroad; he has convinced himself and convinced many others that it furnishes the only assured means of regenerating the blighted country life of Ireland; and beyond the confines of Ireland his principles have been accepted and his counsel has been sought by statesmen and philanthropists who had to deal with social and economic problems analogous to ours. Great Britain has learned from him. India has studied his methods and copied them. His ideals of rural life and his schemes of rural economy have been borrowed by a President of the United States and the obligation handsomely acknowledged through the British Minister.

In Ireland these theories have been realised in a system of co-operative societies which has spread over the whole country, and includes within it the most intelligent and progressive of our farmers. The organisation has provided the farmer with new facilities for production, given him direct access to the best markets, and thus secured a largely increased return to his industry. The money results have been substantial beyond the possibility of accurate reckoning. But money results, important though they are, were not the ultimate aim of the founders of the Irish Co-operative Movement. Their purpose was to establish on an improved economic basis a higher and more satisfying home life in rural Ireland, to restore its strength to the bond which half a century ago held the Irish peasant to the Irish soil and made exile a heart-break, to rob New York and San Francisco of their enchantments for the Irish boy and girl, and fix for the young the goal of their ambitions and the sphere of their work at home. To effect this larger purpose the gains in the field of industry must be applied to the elevating and refining of domestic and social life upon the land. The Irish peasant of to-day quits his country with less

wrenching of the heart-strings than did his predecessor of fifty years ago, not because his lot is harder, but because with enlarged knowledge and improved circumstances his outlook has grown wider and his aspirations more exacting. The home that will now retain him upon the soil must have something of that standard of comfort which he can hope his labour will provide for him elsewhere ; and he must have within reach some of the advantages and pleasures of social intercourse which he has learned to connect with life in a great city.

In his industrial propaganda, Sir Horace Plunkett has had many willing helpers. Men of various ranks and callings have been converted to his views, have come to share his enthusiasm, and, by personal effort and otherwise, have helped towards the large success he has attained. But men, however willing, could lend him little aid in realising that more vital portion of his scheme which was concerned, not with fields and markets, but with the homestead and the home. Here it was that the aid of woman became indispensable, and here, when the time had come for taking up the portion of this general plan—when creameries had been set up in profusion, and agricultural societies abounded, and co-operative banks had become familiar institutions—woman most opportunely offered her co-operation.

The United Irishwomen is the picturesque and suggestive title which the new workers in our field of social effort have adopted. What they have set themselves to do, and by what means they propose to accomplish their purpose, Mrs. Pilkington (sister of Sir Thomas Esmonde), one of the most gifted and energetic of their number, tells in the following pages. What place they hold in the general scheme, and what value their fellow-workers set upon their co-operation, will be learned from the pages which Sir Horace Plunkett contributes to this

little volume. The ideals which inspire men and women alike in the movement of which the Irish co-operative system is the centre, are set forth by Mr. George Russell with his usual insight and sympathy. The three papers form together a manual of high purposes and practical work for Ireland, which every lover of this country will read with satisfaction.

I may be permitted to express the hope that the women of Ireland, whatever their social rank, whom this book may reach, will feel impelled to join the roll, and take a share in the work, of the United Irishwomen, and that the women of other nationalities, to whom it may tell the story of woman's effort in a worthy cause, may, out of their resources, give aid to a body whose zeal is, for the moment, their chief endowment.

T. A. Finlay.

The Plunkett House, Dublin,
May 10th, 1911.

CONTENTS

PART I PAGE

The United Irishwomen—Their Place . . 1

PART II

The United Irishwomen—Their Work . . 19

PART III

Ideals of the New Rural Society . . . 36

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Alternates

https://archive.org/details/unitedirishwomen00plun

THE UNITED IRISHWOMEN

PART I

THEIR PLACE

By Sir Horace Plunkett

That Ireland, more than any other country, is spoken of as a woman is probably due to the appearance in our national affairs of qualities which men call womanly. And this impression is not merely the cheap attribution of racial inferiority by the alien critic with which we are familiar, it is our feeling about ourselves. The Dark Rosaleen, straining her tear-dimmed eyes for foreign aid, is an image of man's creation. I have often wondered how we should fare if the shrewd practical sense, the housekeeperly instinct—real womanly qualities of the greatest value to the modern state—had freer play in our public life. I write of women's work, not women's votes ; for we who join in this book treat of things which neither parliaments nor governments can do for a people—things which they must do for themselves. But it is quite as true in the sphere of voluntary effort as in that of legislation and administration that no country needs woman's help more than our own at the present time, or gets it less. If all this were changed, more might be done in Ireland for Ireland.

To some such thoughts as these may be attributed the birth of a non-political and non-sectarian association of women workers who have started a movement designed to render to our rural population a service which in the

breadth of its conception has never, so far as I know, been equalled except in cities, where such work is so much easier. The United Irishwomen* propose to deal practically in Ireland with a problem affecting all the English-speaking countries, now generally known as the Problem of Rural Life. They will themselves explain in detail their remarkable programme. It will be seen that they intend to organise the women of all classes in every rural district in Ireland for social service. These bodies will discuss, and, if need be, take action upon any and every matter which concerns the welfare of society in their several localities. So far as women's knowledge and influence will avail, they will strive for a higher standard of material comfort and physical wellbeing in the country home, a more advanced agricultural economy, and a social existence a little more in harmony with the intellect and temperament of our people.

It was inevitable that a programme so ambitious should provoke criticism if it did not actually arouse opposition. It has been objected, by those who have a very imperfect knowledge of the scope and aim of this new movement, that it meant the launching of a superfluous organisation upon the already overcrowded waterways of Irish social service. What its promoters propose to do was, it was said, amply provided for by other agencies, such as the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, the Gaelic League, and, more especially, the Women's National Health Association. It would be easy for the

* This name is said to have given the impression in some quarters that a political motive lurks behind the declared objects of the Association, which are social and economic only. The intelligent reader will see that this fear is wholly groundless. In our politically electrical atmosphere the timorous reformer would probably have rejected this title which, for quite irrelevant reasons, some may like and others dislike. But to change the name would make fresh trouble. Let us agree that its levity is condoned by its brevity.

United Irishwomen to show, as indeed will be shown in the following pages, that these critics are under a complete misapprehension, but they feel that the currency which a mistaken impression of their aims and objects has gained demands that their justification should come not only from themselves, but also from those already in the field where they propose to work.

It has, therefore, been decided that the truth about the new movement shall be told to the public in the three parts of this book. The United Irishwomen have selected a very competent leader among them to give a general sketch of their scheme of rural reconstruction—its origin, its aims and objects and working plan—to say what has already been done to test the feasiblity of carrying out their comprehensive programme, and generally to tell what they hope to accomplish. She will be followed, in a brilliant essay, by the best thinker and most charming writer upon rural civilisation that any English-speaking country has produced since the neglect of rural life began. I do not except the Irish poet who first deplored the rural exodus and sang of the simple joys which had deserted an Irish village; for our poet sees that woman must give reality to the Auburn of his dreams.

By way of introduction to these two essays, I have been asked to survey the main facts of Irish Rural Life which demonstrate the need and indicate the opportunity for women's work. My task will be heavy, especially for the reader, but it must be faced. We cannot form a safe judgment upon the need, or the soundness of such a comprehensive movement—still less can we estimate its chances of success—until two things are clearly understood. We must have in our minds at least a general picture of the economic and social structure of the community upon which a new influence is to be brought

to bear, and of the relations in which this movement will stand to the work of other agencies, official and voluntary, doing similar work in the agricultural districts.

The object of the movement is that all-round improvement in the economic and social conditions of rural communities which is now recognised as a pressing need of the civilisation to which we belong. The urgency of that need in any country may be measured by the extent to which its people depend upon agriculture. It is proper, therefore, that in this work upon which all these countries are now consciously engaged, Ireland should take a foremost place. And Ireland *has* taken a very prominent part—in a characteristically Irish way. She has to her credit the best thinking that has been done upon the problem; but, true to her missionary instinct and tradition, she lets the social workers of other countries reap where hers have sown. Her politicians stone her economists, who, when they go abroad, find other countries practising what they have preached at home, and are but ill-requited by the honour which is done to the prophet on his travels.

I do not mean that Irish rural reformers have not a record of practical achievement at home; but I say advisedly that one-tenth of the time, labour and money lavished upon the cause for which they have laboured for two decades past, would in any country with a lesser heritage of antagonisms have produced ten times the fruit: it might even have attained the great national aim which lay behind all these efforts—the building up of a new rural civilisation in our country. Happily a new spirit is abroad in Ireland which revolts against the continuance of this perennial tale of success abroad and failure at home so long after the removal of its cause. And there is a new fact, of the happiest augury, which

gives hope that this spirit may avail to meet the urgency of Ireland's present need. To the fulfilment of this great national purpose is now to be applied the organised force of Irish womanhood. What that force can accomplish it is for the United Irishwomen to prove by their deeds, not by my words. The most we men can do is to help towards an understanding of their idea, which will certainly appeal to the imagination of any man who has laboured in the service to which they will now lend their aid.

First, then, what is this Problem of Rural Life, and why does it affect only the English-speaking countries? I must answer these questions very briefly here; I have discussed them somewhat fully elsewhere.* The neglect of rural life arose during the industrial revolution which began in England in the latter half of the 18th century. A series of sensational inventions for the mechanical application of steam and electricity to manufacture led to the substitution of the centralised factory for the scattered home industries. England, in virtue of her insular position, alone offered that immunity from invasion which the capitalist and the captain of industry alike require. In the circumstances of the time it was natural that industrial development and commercial expansion should come to be more and more regarded as being, what in fact they proved to be, the essence of political strength. Equally natural was it that in the public mind there should be evolved that subordination of the rural to the urban interest which has since moulded the policies of these nations. On the Continent, on the other hand, not only did the absence of the conditions necessary for the rapid growth of the modern manufactur-

* I may refer the reader to my book, "The Problem of Rural Life in the United States" (Macmillan) for some elaboration of the opinions here summarised.

ing city prevent the neglect of rural populations, but the danger of invasion, necessitating a military regime, made their economic efficiency and social welfare of a national importance too obvious to be ignored. To these differences in the situation of the British Isles and Continental countries I attribute the correspondingly different attitudes of both statesmanship and philanthropy towards the rural populations. The United States and the British Empire have ever since in this matter been dominated by the Anglo-Saxon idea.

Whether this view of the origin of rural neglect and of its restriction to the English-speaking countries be accepted or rejected, I do not think there will be much difference of opinion as to the character of the problem which has been left for this generation to solve, or as to the main lines along which the solution must be sought. As one who is saturated with the Irish thought upon the subject, writing for Irish readers who may have had more exciting topics occupying their minds, I may usefully state the main points of the problem we are discussing in a few sentences.

Since the marvellous development of rapid and cheap transportation, supplemented by newly-invented processes for preserving produce fresh in transit, has brought the farmers of the whole world into competition with each other, the farming industry has become much more difficult and complicated. Both the practice and the business of farming have been revolutionised by bringing science into the one and modern business methods—chiefly methods of combination—into the other. The country workers must do with their industry, and with its business, just what the town workers have been forced to do with theirs. And when all this is done, if the domestic and social life of the country does not advance with its economic life, all but the dullards will fly to the

town. That is the problem of rural life in its three parts, and as its solution is the central aim of the United Irishwomen, let us remember that when we speak of a new rural civilisation for Ireland, we mean three definite things. First, our agricultural communities have to bring the new knowledge to bear upon the industry by which they live ; second, they have to re-organise their business methods ; and, third, they must improve their domestic and reconstruct their social life.

It is more than twenty years since a small body of Irishmen started to work on this three-fold problem. The reformers, for reasons often publicly explained, had to begin with the organisation of farmers upon co-operative lines for the better conduct of their business. They next formulated and successfully presented to Parliament a demand for governmental assistance to agriculture, the outstanding feature of the demand being that State aid should be so granted as to supplement and evoke but on no account to provide a substitute for organised self-help. Thus two of the three essential objects of the new policy were provided for. Through the new governmental machinery—the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction—the teachings of modern science are being imported into the practice of farming, while the equally necessary method of combination—that is, the co-operative method—is being applied to the farmer's business by the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Each of these reforms, and the official and voluntary machinery for their promotion, are preparing the way for the third great change which was needed—a reconstruction of the social life of our rural communities.

This three-fold scheme for the rehabilitation of rural life—which we sometimes express in the six-word formula "better farming, better business, better living"—has,

as I have already intimated, had a characteristically Irish history. The very idea of taking up country life as a whole is distinctively Irish. *The Irish Homestead*, the brilliantly written organ of the movement, is known and read by leaders of co-operative thought in every part of the globe. To this fact is, no doubt, largely due the wide appeal which the Irish way of looking at this problem has made to rural reformers. In England and Scotland "Agricultural Organisation Societies" have rendered to the parent Society in Ireland the sincerest flattery by adopting its principles and copying its constitution, rules and procedure. High Indian officials have told us that, in their agricultural development policy, they rely largely upon the experience gained by the agricultural co-operative movement in Ireland. The Danes, from whom we learned, have sent inquirers to learn from us. The farmers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand watch every move in Irish co-operative effort. President Roosevelt, before he left office, wrote to the British Ambassador to express his gratitude to the Irish rural reformers, generously acknowledging that action would not have been taken upon his rural life policy had it not been for the inspiration of Irish thought and the experience gained by Irish work. It yet remains to make this Irish policy bear its full fruits in the land of its birth.

Now it is because an organisation of women is better qualified than any organisation of men to understand and remove the special difficulties and obstacles which this and so many other projects of reform encounter in Ireland, that I bespeak for them the whole-hearted support of all who are seriously concerned for Irish progress. Let me take the most recent and notorious example of the suicidal mania against which the Irish people have to struggle in their efforts to rise to a higher level of economic efficiency in industrial life. Irish

thought has, as I have explained, worked out a scheme of agricultural development based upon what foreign critics admit to be an almost ideal combination of organised voluntary effort with State assistance. To these observers I find it impossible to explain how there can be antagonism between the two sides of this Irish movement—the State aid side and the voluntary effort side. The amazing spectacle of the gladiatorial display in London, not at Earlscourt but at Westminster, between the Irish Department whose chief function it is to help farmers to improve their technical methods and the voluntary association which helps them to re-organise their business methods, makes people who do not understand our politics, but do understand our economic conditions, give us up in despair. For the purposes of my present argument it matters little who is to blame for calling the unharmonious tune for which our country has to pay the piper. The only point I desire to press is that a state of public opinion which allows such a conflict to take place is a grave national evil which I believe women's influence upon public life would go far to correct.

Many reasons might be given for this hindrance to economic progress, but I think they may all be summed up in one—too much political action, too little social action. Of course, the party politician on both sides, after telling me that this is just what they complain of in myself and those who work with me, will be ready with their well-known replies. "See," one party will exclaim, "what our insistence upon discipline, pledges and the rest have done for the farmer; and wait just a little and see what good things we bring with the Home Rule our statesmanship has wrung from the British Parliament." The other party, with equal conviction, will point to the Land Purchase Policy of 1903, and ask what legislative boon Nationalists have to show which can compare with the

Wyndham Act for the liberality of its terms. They will point, too, with pride to the success of their resistance to Home Rule in 1886 and 1893. I concede—and to my own political undoing have always conceded—much to these views. I have recognised truth enough in each of these contentions to anger the supporters of the other, and untruth enough to alienate both sides. For I strongly hold that the narrowing of national thought and action in the sphere of politics has done nothing to advance the political and much to retard the economic and social development of our country. In any case what I desire to emphasise is that, owing to the weakness of our social organisation, we have come to consider politics and administration as far more important than they are, and we try to make them take the place of voluntary social action, which they never can.

In practice this weakness manifests itself in two special ways. First, we are accustomed to regard the Government as the source of all bad and the possible source of all good things, and it is hard therefore to realise the necessity for voluntary action. People can only be roused to such an effort by the force of example; even the smallest achievement is useful in this way, and that is one reason why I am glad that the United Irishwomen are beginning with definite action on practical and domestic matters. The second result of the predominance of politics is that it robs the spirit of self-reliance, when aroused, of its practical results. The history of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society supplies a very strong illustration of this. Its root principle is, of course, self-help; but it can make self-help effective in only one way—namely, through organisation. Here it falls foul of the political machine which, like all political machines, is as tyrannous as the spirit of a people permits. The masters of the machine claim the monopoly of the national

mind and the public activity. In politics the discipline of external organisation may have its tactical justification, but in social action the spontaneity of individual initiative is vitally necessary to the success of organised effort.

Here, then, is the real mission of the United Irishwomen. They will find in social work an outlet for some of that abundant energy which has been displayed by women on the other side of the channel in the campaign for the suffrage. And while it is very possible that Irishwomen will in the future wish to take a larger share in political affairs than they have in the past, I have sufficient confidence in their intelligence to believe that they will know, better than we men have known, how to keep business and politics apart.

When I say that these and other evils in Ireland arise from the weakness of our social organisation, the phrase may appear obscure. Apart from politics and religion, we are so accustomed to being unorganised that we hardly realise what organisation is. Let me illustrate the matter with a few examples taken from other countries. Both rural England and rural Germany are organised aristocratically; the landlord is the head of the community which is composed of the tenants on his estate. The system has, no doubt, grave faults and is being attacked; but it exists and performs its functions. Rural Russia is organised in the system of village communities, a primitive and barbaric system, on which great inroads have been made; but it is still extremely powerful, and it performs in some fashion its task of holding the community together and regulating the activities of each member. Rural France, by becoming a country of peasant proprietors, discarded the old aristocratic organisation of landlord and tenant, and endeavoured to substitute for it a merely political system, under which the peasants, socially independent and equal before the law, have until just

recently lived in communities, with hardly any internal organisation, under the control of a strong central government. In spite of the magnificent economic qualities of the French peasant this system has proved inadequate, and rural France is organising itself by agricultural co-operation for those necessary functions of every society which are not political. Rural Denmark has done the same, with a success so well known that I need not dwell upon it.

Now, rural Ireland is admirably organised for political purposes, as politics are understood in this country; it is also admirably organised for religious purposes; but, since the old clan system disappeared, for any social purpose it can hardly be said to have been organised at all. The system of landlord and tenant did not, if we take the country as a whole, work in Ireland as it worked and still works in England; it did not give a constitution to the rural community. It might, perhaps, have been possible to improve that system, but the method pursued by Mr. Gladstone and his supporters led to its destruction. The Irish Land Act of 1881 made land purchase inevitable, and occupying ownership, now being carried out, is accepted on all hands as the only solution of the agrarian difficulty. It is not so generally observed that land purchase totally fails to solve, nay that it accentuates, the social difficulty.

The peaceful character of the agrarian changes now taking place in Ireland, compared with the violence with which these changes have been promoted in other countries, and at other times in our own country, are apt to make us miss the social significance of the revolution through which we are passing. In an agricultural country, the transfer of the land from a few comparatively wealthy owners to a numerous body of relatively poor occupiers must have far-reaching political, economic and

social consequences. It will be remembered that, at a much earlier stage of the working out of the Land Settlement, Mr. Gerald Balfour's Local Government Act made a transfer of political power which corresponded, in its effect upon the balance of class influence, to the transfer of the land. The political and the economic bearings of these two transfers were obvious enough; but I do not think it has been generally realised that their social result was no less far-reaching. The plain fact is the whole structure of our rural society has been swept away—and this by the power which had upheld it for centuries.

Now it is unnecessary to labour the proof that land purchase renders more urgent the necessity, which already existed, for organising the farmers. For a community of peasant proprietors, individually owning the land by which they live, agricultural co-operation presents the only chance of economic success. There is no other method so far discovered by which the small cultivator can practise those economies in production and in distribution which are essential to his success in the modern market. He cannot otherwise develop the security which is required to enable him to obtain working capital on favourable terms. But the point which concerns us chiefly here is that since the clan system and the landlord and tenant system have been successively abolished—the one by the strong hand, the other by the long purse—co-operation is the only possible foundation for the new rural society which has now to be established. Parliament has done its work in clearing the ground; the people themselves have got to erect the fabric of a new social order.

This the promoters of agricultural organisation in Ireland have thoroughly understood from the first. We also knew, by Continental experience, that the

farmers must be organised before they could take much advantage of the technical teaching and assistance offered by the Department of Agriculture ; in other words, that "better business" must precede "better farming." But we failed to realise fully two things : the first was the enormous difficulty of establishing a new social organisation in a country where there is none already existing ; it is like digging foundations in sand. The second was the importance of women's work. We had put "better business" first, "better farming" next, and "better living" was to follow as a result of these two. But as things are to-day we shall not get very far, either with better business or better farming, unless we can show some better living as a bait, and thus stimulate the desire for more. And this the women can do best ; in fact they alone can do it.

We are not the first to discover this ; the Granges, those great societies which have attacked the problem of rural life in America, have from a very early period in their history recognised the necessity of giving women a prominent place in rural organisation. Canada has hundreds of women's institutes in her vast agricultural area. The greatest co-operative movement in the world, that which has done so much for the British artisan, has its woman's side in the Women's Co-operative Guild. The United Irishwomen are not a branch or department of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society ; they are an independent association ; but they come in to complete our work at the point where we believe it to be at once most important and most imperfect.

The idea for which they stand, I have already said, embraces the entire life of the rural community in so far as those who wish to be good citizens have it within their power to improve that life. The plan, as I understand it, is to get the women of all classes to meet on

terms of perfect equality, although women of education, means and leisure would have to take the initiative, and would very likely be continued in the leadership. The local branch would be a council of women which would meet to discuss all matters relating to the well-being of the neighbourhood. In this sense they would overlap the work of many other organisations. But, having to concern themselves with every part and aspect of rural life, they are not likely to burden their scheme of social re-construction with work being adequately performed by other agencies. Their central body will be wholly, and their branches I should say largely, deliberative, advisory and propagandist, rather than executive. Each branch will, I presume, be free either to take up some departments of women's work themselves, to promote and organise new agencies, or to assist existing ones for any purpose of social betterment.

The subjects for discussion and, where necessary, the purposes of action would group themselves under two main heads. Firstly, there would be those matters in the community life which come within the function of government, central and local, such as sanitation under the Local Government Board, the manifold activities of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, and the County Committees of Agriculture and Technical Instruction which work with it. A vista of usefulness is opened by education, in its physical rather than its mental and moral aspects, in the rural schools. In all this work the responsible authorities should welcome the critical but sympathetic attention of a voluntary but efficient social service. Yet, without some organisation for the purpose, local public opinion, however sound, has no operative effect. And in these matters an exclusively male public opinion is inadequate, if not, indeed, unhealthy. It is quite true that we have democratically

constituted local representative bodies, and that here and there a woman secures a seat on one of them. But does anyone feel that even in these cases the woman's view has the influence, which, in the interest of the home, the family, and the nation, should belong to it ?

Though I take it second, because most people think that way, it is in the sphere of voluntary effort that the chief neglect of rural life is to be found, and it is there that the chief work of re-construction is to be done. The most important attempt to organise voluntary effort on a large and comprehensive scale for other than political or religious purposes is the agricultural co-operative movement ; and it is in alliance with this movement that the United Irishwomen will, at any rate at first, do their best work. The success of agricultural co-operation depends upon two things, intelligence and loyalty. In most parts of Ireland there is an abundance of the former quality, but a very serious lack of the latter. If women can make the members of the now ubiquitous co-operative movement in Ireland realise the duty of giving to their several societies the support upon which the benefits of the various undertakings depend—especially if they could get them to give the support on higher grounds than that of self-interest—they will make an immediate and an invaluable contribution to the wealth as well as the social well-being of their country.

In addition to this general interest in the co-operative movement, they will find much useful work to be done in connection with the co-operative societies within reach of the branches. Looking at the matter from the household economy point of view, they will see that those parts of the co-operative movement to which men must attend are properly conducted. They might even work a miracle and make the members of the committees attend punctually ! They should insist upon far more

women being elected upon the committees of any societies whose operations directly or indirectly affect their share of the home work. They ought to be the predominant element in poultry and egg and bee-keeping societies, and to be represented on the committees of co-operative creameries.

I must not wander further into details ; I have already trespassed too far upon the ground assigned to Mrs. Pilkington. But I wished to welcome women's active participation in the co-operative movement. Here they find a large body of their fellow-workers struggling against wanton opposition, and, worse still, a deadening apathy. They believe, as I believe, that this hindrance to their progress is due primarily to a grave omission on the part of the reformers. They say, with truth I fear, that we men, having to deal with a problem that embraces the whole of rural life, have attempted to enlist only half the rural population—the male half. This omission they now propose to repair ; and as one of those responsible for this imperfect movement I hope they may realise the most cherished but least fulfilled ambition of its male leaders—the evolution of a healthy and progressive community life. To women's influence I look for the brightening of the social sky in the grey dawn of peasant Ireland.

I have ventured to make a similar appeal to men of my own class in Ireland.* I said just now that the leadership of this remarkable movement would naturally fall to women of wealth, leisure and education. I had in my mind the hundreds and thousands of refined and educated

* Noblesse Oblige (Maunsel & Co., Dublin, 6d.)—in some sense a male counterpart to this essay.

women who are living, up and down the country parts of Ireland, lives that are innocent, elegant and, within their limits, beneficent, but a little aimless. When I see these women surrounded by a mass of poverty far more sordid and cheerless than it need be, very willing to help it but not knowing how, I feel that there is here a splendid reserve of the patriotism we want most, only waiting for a call to action. I see the United Irishwomen drawing them out of their isolation, teaching them to teach others, and forming them into an ordered league of workers that shall penetrate every corner of our country and leave it a better and a happier place than they found it.

Not long ago, before a learned Society, I said much of what I have written above about the action taken in other lands upon Irish ideas. Anticipating a sentiment which I felt was in the air, I ended with the words: "You will say, 'how like Ireland—so large abroad, so small at home.' Well, better so than the other way." My mind told me that this was a make-shift answer and my heart was not in it. There *have* been times when we practised in our country what we preached throughout the world. With new-born hope I now look to the United Irishwomen to bring it about that Ireland shall lead the English-speaking world upon this new Problem of Rural Life, not only in ideas scattered like blossoms before the wind upon alien shores, but in deeds deep-rooted in Irish soil.

PART II

THE UNITED IRISHWOMEN—THEIR WORK

By Ellice Pilkington.

The United Irishwomen, who owe their title to Miss Susan Mitchell, the sub-editor of the *Irish Homestead*, have been forced into print a little prematurely. Their motto is deeds, not words, and they are the less inclined to talk of this new movement of theirs because as yet they have but little to show. But they are ready to defend their principles and their good name, the name not of one woman but of many, as woman alone can defend her own good name, and as they have no backword step to record they are not afraid to hasten forward their work and explain their ideals to meet the exigencies of the time, now that they have been called upon to do so.

The women's movements all over the world are the outcome of necessity, and women in Ireland must of necessity join in the general advance. Many of us had been thinking of this for some time past and wondering what we each individually could and ought to do. The answer that came to us each individually, summed up, amounted to this: "Do your own work, but do it better than you have done it hitherto." This no doubt was all right for the individual; how would it affect the community?

Taking a survey of Ireland in general, from the feminine point of view, we came to two conclusions. First, that the institutions in the country, already existing, were quite sufficient for our purpose if we could only make use of them. The machinery was all there, we had only to set it in motion. Secondly, we saw that in order to set this machinery to work we needed the help of men, and that we must attach ourselves to some men's organisation that would be willing to let us work with it without stamping out our individuality. I was recommended by a relative of my own, a member of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, to attend the Annual General Meeting of that Society in 1909. I have since heard that many women who are now "United Irishwomen," but who were then entirely unconnected with the Agricultural Organisation Society, were also present. Mr. George Russell at that meeting read a paper on rural civilisation, and in it pointed out to us quite clearly that our place was ready for us if we were ready to step into it.

The exodus from the country to the city is often woman's responsibility as well as her ruin. It is essential to Ireland that her rural population should be strong, healthy, active. It must remain on the land, happily occupied, well employed, socially and intellectually developed. Here is permanent work for women to do, and that is the organisation best qualified to help them.

The question next before us was: "Will the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society consider the women's side of the rural problem from the women's point of view?" An article by Mr. George Russell, which appeared in the *Irish Homestead* of January 22nd, 1910, on "Migration of the Irishwomen from the Farm," put this beyond doubt. A number of letters from women all over Ireland—among them "Irishwoman

of 1910"—were addressed to the Editor of the *Homestead* (Mr. Russell) showing that women had been thinking on lines parallel to those on which men had been working; that in order to make the men's work stable and enduring it was only necessary for these lines to be drawn so closely together as to merge, and that men and women, while working side by side, could, at the same time, work together at their own problems in our rural communities for the general welfare.

That this was possible was proved by Mrs. Harold Lett, who started a Branch of United Irishwomen at Bree, in County Wexford, on June 15th, 1910. Mrs. Lett—herself a practical farmer, farming her own land, Vice-President of the County Wexford Farmers' Association, in close touch with the needs of farmers' wives and labourers' wives, and having her own interests bound up with theirs—formed a woman's committee, on which the county families, the farmers' wives and the labourers' wives were represented under the presidency of Lady Power. Rules were drawn up, and the Branch set to work to brighten the social life of the district by bringing the people together in the Parish Hall, to which it was soon able to subscribe, and by setting the women to work at those practical details of their life to which, hitherto, they had not devoted enough attention. A successful Flower Show was held at Bree on August 20th, which provided funds for working expenses. Finding that her initial effort had been successful, Mrs. Lett called a meeting at the Plunkett House of all the women, who had become interested, to discuss the desirability of forming an all-Ireland society. A committee was formed in order to draw up rules, and these rules were based on those that had worked so well at Bree. A resolution was passed at this meeting to the effect that where societies dealing with the objects of the United

Irishwomen were already in existence, they should be made use of, as far as possible, so as to avoid conflict or overlapping. After this it still remained for us to find out if the people we wanted to help wanted to be helped, and, above all, if they wanted to be helped by us. We asked to be allowed to send representatives to the Annual Meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, and were invited to do so, and also to read a paper there stating our aims and objects.

We stated our case very simply, saying that we were of opinion that men could not make full use of their legislative and social organisations without our co-operation any more than we could attain our ends without their assistance. We promised to help them if they would help us by encouraging us to start branches of our women's union close to their co-operative societies. A vote of assent was given to our proposal, and we started at once to fulfil our part of the bargain. On the following day we met at the Plunkett House, and established a provisional committee, electing Mrs. Lett as president. This committee was empowered to undertake the organisation of branches.

Now, it may be as well to consider what our qualifications were for undertaking such work. We had no experience beyond that which is gained in the ordinary every day life of women. We had no special training for doing what we intended to do, and we, none of us, aspired to reform society or preach any gospel but that of domestic economy, good comradeship and truth.

The very first day we appeared in public we were attacked on account of our want of training as nurses. The attack was, perhaps, justified because the training of most of us only amounted to this—some of us were mothers, some of us had devoted our lives to the nursing of aged relatives, some of us had seen men die in hospitals

during war, and others were beginning lives in which they would be likely to meet with similar experiences. Whatever our lack of skill might be we all knew what we intended to do, and were determined to do it, and therefore we never doubted but that we should find the way, and secure the willing services of those who possessed the training that we lacked.

A certain number of ladies resident in or near Dublin undertook to do research work and to procure information which they proposed to summarise for the use of organisers. This work has proved most valuable.

On December 3rd I started for Dungloe, Co. Donegal, with a diminutive personal equipment, but with the best substitute that good-fellowship could give me—an organiser's bag and map lent by the Secretary of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, a thermos bottle, and a passport in the old tongue given voluntarily by the President of the Gaelic League. A herald in telegraphic form was despatched before me by Father Finlay.

On arrival I found an independent capable community, a flourishing co-operative Society with a manager who not only knew his work, but held the confidence of his people, a knitting industry in the hands of the women and girls, and all around them great possibilities for cottage gardening, dairying, and jam-making; a village hall for social meetings, a fine healthy race of men and women, bi-lingual, capable of enjoying intellectual pursuits, and not ashamed to use their hands. And yet there was a silent sorrow here, for the curse of emigration was upon them. The young women and girls were slipping off one by one to the land of promise on the other side of the broad Atlantic, and only some of them came home again to listen mournfully to the sad sobbing of the sea on a dreary shore. The women did not speak to me of this, but the men did.

A meeting was held in the newly-opened Village Hall, where I gave the message the United Irishwomen had sent me to deliver. The proposal to start a branch of United Irishwomen was welcomed enthusiastically, and the men promised to safeguard the interests of the sister society and free the women from the oppression of the "truck" system. Members were elected to act on a committee, and within a week the officers of this committee were appointed. I left on December the 5th with these encouraging words in my ears: "A good honest movement like this is sure to succeed." There is now at Dungloe a busy branch of United Irishwomen with over two hundred members; two instructresses under the home improvement scheme are at work (subjects—household economy, home dairying, cottage gardening); the Village Hall is a centre for meetings of all kinds.

On December 6th Mrs. Lett formed a second branch of the United Irishwomen in County Wexford, at Davidstown. On the 7th and 8th I visited Oylegate and Glenbrien, and also Bree, where I was sent by the executive committee to thank the women of Bree for the pioneer work they had done, and to study the methods of their branch.

The executive committee held several meetings in Dublin, and a great deal of individual work was done by members of the society in connection with organisation.

In January and February I visited Wicklow and Wexford, and inaugurated branches at Oylegate, Glenbrien, and Coolgreany. County Wexford is admirably suited to, and quite ready for, branches of United Irishwomen in consequence of the progressive character of the people, their spirit of enterprise and their practical ability to create societies of their own, for their own purposes, and to avail themselves of every facility put at their disposal by the

Department of Agriculture and the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society.

On February 8th Mrs. Stopford, who volunteered to act as hostess for the United Irishwomen, presided over their first social gathering; Mr. H. F. Norman, gave an address on women's part in co-operative work, which gave rise to much interesting discussion.

On February 10th I started on a tour through Waterford, Tipperary, Cork, and Clare, the results of which the future will show. At Kilkee I found a people with great advantages at their disposal, but needing the stimulus of the United Irishwomen to induce them to make use of them. The hospitality of the people, from the parish priest to my hostess at the hotel, was unbounded. The problems of education, domestic economy, and public health, which they will have to work upon, are such as to interest any body of capable women, to say nothing of the sturdy little group of patriots I left behind me in the Kilkee Branch.

So far I have skimmed over the ground the United Irishwomen have broken up. The ploughing, sowing, and reaping rests with the branch members. I have no doubt that they will make full use of their committees for dealing with their local concerns. We had now proved that we were wanted, and could be useful in the country districts; the next task was to consolidate our central organisation and frame it on lines that would be permanent and practical. This we have done with the help of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, of which we hope to become the natural complement, and to which we are affiliated.

The constitution of the United Irishwomen is as follows:—The Society consists of a central union and branches, the whole governed by an Executive Committee.

The work of the central union is first of all to organise the women of Ireland by the formation of branches, as the parent body of the co-operative movement has so largely succeeded in organising the men. It serves also as a link between the branches when so formed. Those wishing to join the central union as individual members are proposed and seconded by existing members, and are elected by a majority of votes at a meeting of the executive committee. Their annual subscription is 2s. 6d.

Branches are formed in rural districts comprising all the women in the neighbourhood, and are governed by a committee composed of the president, vice-president, honorary treasurer, honorary secretary, and twelve members. Each branch pays an affiliation fee to the central union of 5s., and each member of a branch pays a subscription of 6d. to her branch.

The executive committee is composed of representatives of branches and individual members who meet in Dublin and deal with all questions that concern the Society.

The present committee consists of the following:—Mrs. Harold Lett (President), Mrs. Alfred Hamilton (Vice-President), Miss Constance Pim (Hon. Secretary), The Countess of Fingall, The Hon. Mary Lawless, Mrs. Stopford, Mrs. Pilkington, Mrs. Stephen Spring Rice, Mrs. A. J. Crichton, Miss Helen Warren, Miss Helena Kelly, Miss Beatrice O'Brien, Miss Susan L. Mitchell, Miss Purdon. The Treasurer is Mr. E. A. Stopford. All these arrangements are provisional, and remain in force until the holding of the next general meeting.

The United Irishwomen are co-operators, and affiliated to the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, because they are closely associated with men whose interests are agricultural and to whom co-operation is essential, and they are working for a country whose prosperity depends

upon the development and permanent stability of the agricultural population. But they are also co-operators in a wider sense than this, because they realise that all the women throughout the country have a common work and a common basis of union which the men have not. All women who are wives and all women who are daughters living with their parents have the same duties, the same experiences, in essentials, in greater or less degree, and, therefore, they can help and educate and encourage each other in certain directions with the best and most practical results. The community of their life's work makes it possible for women of all ranks, opinions, and occupations to join together with a readiness which is impossible to men. The distinctive feature of men's work is specialisation, which means division of labour, difference of ideas, of habits, of modes of life, and these things tend of necessity to make bars between man and man. This specialisation and division of labour does not exist for women; their primary business in all ranks of life is to keep the home. Therefore, while it is possible for a certain number of men to co-operate for a certain purpose, and for a certain number of women to co-operate with them to assist this purpose, it is impossible for all men to co-operate for the purposes of all their different occupations; whereas it is obviously possible for all women to join together in the doing of that part of their work which is and must ever be uniform.

The work which the United Irishwomen propose to do in rural Ireland may be considered under three heads—Agriculture and Industries; Domestic Economy; Social and Intellectual Development.

A woman's place in connection with agriculture and industries is to encourage the farmer to make use of his own agricultural organisation, to support his co-operative societies, and assist him when these societies touch on

woman's domain, as in the case of poultry societies which cannot be run without the intelligent and expert co-operation of women. The raising of poultry, preparing it for market, the marketing of eggs—a thing which would mean prosperity to a great number of farmers—is women's work; and women are willing enough to do it when shown the way. Pig rearing is in many districts an essential element in farm wealth, and the feeding, and sometimes the care of the pig, devolves largely on the women. The problem of how to do this in the most efficient and least uncomfortable and unattractive way is one to which our United Irishwomen should address themselves.

Home dairying can be much improved, and it is of immense importance that a sufficient supply of milk for every household should be available. The creameries in certain districts greatly assist the farmer in the marketing of his produce; at the same time they exact from the farmer's wife a power of discrimination sufficient to enable her to know how much milk to sell and how much to keep for home consumption.

The women could encourage the farmers to use the agricultural banks and make full use of them themselves; they could insist on the keeping of farm accounts and assist in the doing of this. Many girls are employed in shops at book-keeping, but few ever try to keep their father's accounts for him, although quite capable of doing so when they first leave school.

Women can attend agricultural shows, send exhibits, promote competitions of many kinds. An arbor day for United Irishwomen might be instituted. It is very important to make the labourer's wife understand that she can help to raise the wages of the labourer if she can by her influence and by the food she gives her man increase his market value.

Cottage gardening is a thing which women and children are not only capable of doing, but which they often take a greater interest in than men—so the county instructors say. Bee-keeping is a very remunerative pursuit, and depends to some extent upon the garden ; as do fruit and vegetable preserving. Cider-making could be revived in Ireland (if mothers would prevent their boys stealing apples).

The branch committees of the United Irishwomen in co-operation with the county committees under the Department of Agriculture, and assisted by the farmers' societies, could do for the farmer's wife what the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society does for the farmer. Women can increase the activity of bacon factories, meat supply depots, co-operative stores and local corn mills, and support Irish industries by the co-operative purchase of blankets, tweeds, materials for clothing, boots, and harness. They could revive cottage industries, basket making, rush-plaiting, mat and hat making, wood-carving, carpentering, designing, cabinetmaking, needlework, embroidery, lace, crochet, dressmaking, knitting, spinning, weaving, &c., and substitute agencies controlled by women's associations for traders' agencies which result in " truck."

The domain of domestic economy is greatly enlarged and of much wider interest when the spirit of co-operation penetrates it.

Women were not made to work alone any more than men; wholesome competition stimulates them just as it stimulates men. Take for instance a village where the spirit of self-help and friendly rivalry exists. Every home will vie with every other home in increasing its standard of comfort, and the general standard will rise in consequence. The true value of this spirit is that the

"woman of the house" is on her mettle, and she makes her home bright because she herself wants to, and not because some critical outsider chances to tell her that she ought to do so.

Personal neatness and tidiness in the home increase women's influence; thrift, regularity, wholesome and suitable cooking, and the use of good materials for cooking, proper selection of food for children and invalids are things that ought to be encouraged, and that can be attained in a certain degree even in the homes of the poor.

There is need for co-operation among women with regard to the use of pure wheaten flour; and barley is an article of diet that ought not to be neglected. Good laundry work is remunerative, and contributes very much to the comfort and dignity of the home. It may be possible in time to aspire to the co-operative village laundry so much utilised in France and elsewhere.

Hygiene has so far been taught as a school lesson; the United Irishwomen hope that the lesson will be learnt and applied so as to alter entirely the conditions of life in rural communities. In this field they hope to co-operate with and assist the Women's National Health Association.

The question of nursing in the home and in the village, and the best way of securing the most suitable kind of nurse, and of raising the funds to do so will also be carefully dealt with in every instance in which it presents itself to the local committees. We do not doubt that on this vital question the medical profession and the various nursing institutions in existence will give them every assistance. The officers of public health and the local government authorities will be approached on all matters connected with this question when necessary. That the home is the cradle of the nation is an old saying

and a true one; when health becomes a national responsibility in the public mind it shows that the mother has failed to fulfil her duty adequately. "Back to the land" is the cry to the men; "back to the home" is the call to the women. The United Irishwomen want to help each other to bring up their children, healthy in body and healthy in mind. The things that are learnt at school are often forgotten; the things that are learnt in the home are nearly always remembered.

There must be co-operation between the home and the school, and mothers and school teachers must be working more or less in unison if the education of the child is to be a success. The United Irishwomen hope to increase the good understanding that ought to exist between the parents and their childrens' teachers, and also to assist the teachers and the school managers in all practical ways.

Girls are especially in need of good home training in duty, honour, and self-respect. Nowadays they need very careful teaching, which must not be entirely outside the home; if it is acquired outside the home—in the school, or at the technical class—it must be applied in the home. They have to learn the value of work and pride in good work, and to be competently trained for professions. The United Irishwomen mean to make it their business to attend to the girl members of their branches, to organise classes for them, and to provide plenty of suitable amusement when possible.

This brings me to the third department of women's action—the social and intellectual one. There is no doubt that the exodus from the country to the town is greatly due to the monotony and dullness of country life. This permeates all classes down to the very poor. It is generally less expensive to live in the country than in the town, but greater poverty and more amusement seems to most people preferable to less poverty and more

dullness. The dreariness of the country is just as much a cause of emigration among the young people as lack of employment. A girl won't say "I am going to America because I can't dance at home," but she will say "I can't get anything to do at home," and she will go. The United Irishwomen hope to make it possible for girls to get employment and amusement at home, and in the country as well as in the town. They will endeavour to procure and make good use of Village Halls, where they will organise classes of all sorts, give lectures, concerts, get up plays, have debates and open libraries to circulate between branches. There are already a number of readers among the United Irishwomen who will select books and eliminate unsuitable literature from their catalogue. There is need for the creation of public opinion in this matter of the choice of books. Village libraries ought to contain a great many books dealing with subjects of interest to the farmer and his wife, as well as story books for boys and girls, and young children ought not to be forgotten.

Music is very undeveloped in Ireland, but that musical talent exists there is no doubt; the Gaelic revival and the Feis Ceoil are doing a great deal to develop it, and the United Irishwomen hope to assist their efforts in every way. Much individual talent has already been shown at our branch gatherings, and girls' and boys' choirs should not be impossible to obtain in the future. Art for the moment will be a little outside our sphere, but it is the intention of the branch committees to communicate with the central organisation if any local talent needs assistance and to try to foster it when possible. Country sports, meetings, flower shows, and any gatherings that tend to increase friendly feeling and enlarge the interests of the community will have the cordial co-operation of the United Irishwomen.

They further consider it essential that women in Ireland should make their wishes known if they want them to be gratified, and they feel that they have somewhat neglected their own and each others interests by not putting them before the public more prominently than they have done. For this reason they intend to seek for better representation on public bodies, so as to be able to make their point of view known in public affairs. We have some women poor law guardians, for instance, but we want more of them; we want our voice heard when questions dealing with sanitation and public health are discussed by district and county councils, and when schemes for agricultural improvement are considered by their committees; in short we want to benefit as much as men by the facilities offered us by our local government and by public departments. Patriotism for women is a thing of deeds, not words—it must be part of their daily life. The most magnificent theories of men and the constructive work that they do cannot create national prosperity if the women do not help them in domestic details.

Our branches are already dealing with many of the subjects outlined above, but they choose, each according to the needs of the district and its possibilities, one definite object to begin with. Thus we have cottage gardening, bee-keeping, poultry, sewing, embroidery, knitting, cheap meals for fair days, and a district nurse, as objects to work for in our seven existing branches at present.

Is it possible for the United Irishwomen to realise their ambitious programme? I say "Yes," unreservedly. This may seem preposterous at first sight, but I think that I am in a position to prove it. I have lived amongst Irishwomen on the Continent, in France and Italy, and

in South Africa. In all these places they have been associated with the women of the locality, and in each case they have adapted themselves to their surroundings and done the work at hand without difficulty as well as, often better than, their neighbours. In every case they have brought a light-hearted, plucky, kindly spirit and a saving sense of humour which has been the life and soul of the community. They show their capabilities when they are put to the test. They do not stop to consider whether a thing is easy or difficult to do when it has to be done, they just make a shot at it, as it were, with mother wit to help them, and nine times out of ten they do the thing successfully. Why have they, up to this, been so slow to do at home what they can do abroad? I say it is because they have not been put to the test. They have, partly through circumstances over which they had little control, been accustomed to be helped, and have not quite realised what they can do for themselves. Those amongst them who understand the national character, who have read it in the old poems, the songs and traditions, who feel it as strong in themselves now as it was in the people of long ago, who know that it will always be the same because it has been built up from the same soil in the same land, although in varying conditions—when these women unite and tell their sisters what they know and show them what has been and what can be done, there will be a union of strength that will prove irresistible.

We are tired of seeing our sons die in foreign countries because they are too poor to live in Ireland. We are maddened by the sad look in the eyes of the returned Irish-American girl who hates the discomfort of her Irish home. We are prematurely aged by too much hard lonely work. We are sorry for our old people to whom we cannot give the care that old age deserves. We are

frightened by disease. We dread the horrors of the lunatic asylums. We are now awake to the fact that relief from all these troubles will only come to us from within ourselves. We must band together, join hands and hearts, and work not half-heartedly and in sorrow but joyfully, at times merrily, ever looking to where the sun is breaking through the cloud. We have a great inheritance of youth and hope, and we have only to put out our hands to take it and to pass it on to our children when our day's work is done.

PART III

IDEALS OF THE NEW RURAL SOCIETY

By George W. Russell

For a country where political agitations follow each other as rapidly as plagues in an Eastern city it is curious how little constructive thought we can show on the ideals of a rural civilisation. But economic peace ought surely to have its victories to show as well as political war. I would a thousand times rather dwell on what men and women working together may do than on what may result from majorities at Westminster. The beauty of great civilisation has been built up far more by people working together than by any corporate action of the State. In these socialistic days we grow pessimistic about our own efforts and optimistic about the working of the legislature. I think we do right to expect great things from the State, but we ought to expect still greater things from ourselves. We ought to know full well that if the State did twice as much as it does we would never rise out of mediocrity among the nations unless we have unlimited faith in the power of our personal efforts. to raise and transform Ireland and unless we translate the faith into works. The State can give a man an economic holding, but only the man himself can make it into an Earthly Paradise, and it is a dull business, unworthy of a being made in the image of God, to grind

away at work without some noble end to be served, some glowing ideal to be attained.

Ireland is a horribly melancholy and cynical country. Our literary men and poets, who ought to give us courage, have taken to writing about the Irish as people who "went forth to battle but always fell," sentimentalising over incompetence instead of invigorating us and liberating us and directing our energies. We have developed a new and clever school of Irish dramatists who say they are holding up the mirror to Irish peasant nature, but they reflect nothing but decadence. They delight in the broken lights of insanity, the ruffian who beats his wife, the weakling who is unfortunate in love and who goes and drinks himself to death, while the little decaying country towns are seized on with avidity and exhibited on the stage in every kind of decay and human futility and meanness. Well, it is well to be chastened in spirit, but it is a thousand times better to be invigorated in spirit. To be positive is always better than to be negative. These writers understand and sympathise with Ireland more through their lower nature than their higher nature. Judging by the things people write in Ireland and by what they go to see performed on the stage, it is more pleasing to them to see enacted characters they know are meaner than themselves than to see characters which they know are nobler than themselves.

All this is helping on our national pessimism and self-mistrust. It helps to fix these features permanently in our national character which were excusable enough as temporary moods after defeat. The younger generation should hear nothing about failures. It should not be hypnotised into self-contempt. Our energies in Ireland are sapped by a cynic self-mistrust which is spread everywhere through society. It is natural enough that the elder generation, who were promised so many millen-

niums, but who actually saw four million people deducted from the population, should be cynical. But it is not right they should give only to the younger generation the heritage of their disappointments without any heritage of hope. From early childhood parents and friends are hypnotising the child into beliefs and unbeliefs, and too often they are exiling all nobility out of life, all confidence, all trust, all hope; they are insinuating a mean self-seeking, a self-mistrust, a vulgar spirit which laughs at every high ideal until at last the hypnotised child is blinded to the presence of any beauty or nobility in life. No country can ever hope to rise beyond a vulgar mediocrity where there is not unbounded confidence in what its humanity can do. The self-confident American will make a great civilisation yet, because he believes with all his heart and soul in the future of his country and in the powers of the American people. What Whitman called their "barbaric yawp" may yet turn into the lordliest speech and thought, but without self-confidence a race will go no whither. If Irish people do not believe they can equal or surpass the stature of any humanity which has been upon the globe, then they had better all emigrate and become servants to some superior race, and leave Ireland to new settlers who may come here with the same high hopes as the Pilgrim Fathers had when they went to America.

We must go on imagining better than the best we know. Even in their ruins now, Greece and Italy seem noble and beautiful with broken pillars and temples made in their day of glory. But before ever there was a white marble temple shining on a hill it shone with a more brilliant beauty in the mind of some artist who designed it. Do many people know how that marvellous Greek civilisation spread along the shores of the Mediterranean? Little nations owning no more land

than would make up an Irish barony sent out colony after colony. The seed of beautiful life they sowed grew and blossomed out into great cities and half divine civilisations. Italy had a later blossoming of beauty in the Middle Ages, and travellers to-day go into little Italian towns and find them filled with master-pieces of painting and architecture and sculpture, witnesses of a time when nations no larger than an Irish county rolled their thoughts up to Heaven and mixed their imagination with the angels. Can we be contented in Ireland with the mean streets of our country towns and the sordid heaps of our villages, dominated in their economics by the vendors of alcohol and inspired as to their ideals by the vendors of political animosities ?

I would not mind people fighting in a passion to get rid of all that barred some lordly scheme of life, but quarrels over political bones from which there is little or nothing wholesome to be picked only disgust. People tell me that the countryside must always be stupid and backward, and I get angry, as if it were said that only townspeople had immortal souls, and it was only in the city that the flame of divinity breathed into the first man had any unobscured glow. The countryside in Ireland could blossom into as much beauty as the hillsides in mediæval Italy if we could but get rid of our self-mistrust. We have all that any race ever had to inspire them, the heavens overhead, the earth underneath, and the breath of life in our nostrils. I would like to exile the man who would set limits to what we can do, who would take the crown and sceptre from the human will and say, marking out some petty enterprise as the limit : " Thus far can we go and no farther, and here shall our life be stayed." Therefore I hate to hear of stagnant societies who think because they have made butter well they have crowned their parochial generation

with a halo of glory and they can rest content with the fame of it all, listening to the whirr of the steam separators and pouching in peace of mind the extra penny a gallon for their milk. And I dislike the little groups who meet a couple of times a year and call themselves co-operators because they have got their fertilisers more cheaply and have done nothing else. Why, the village gombeen man has done more than that! He has at least brought most of the necessaries of life there by his activities; and I say, if we co-operators do not aim at doing more than the Irish Scribes and Pharisees we shall have little to be proud of. A poet interpreting the words of Christ to His followers who had scorned the followers of the old order made Him say :—

> "Scorn ye their hopes, their tears, their inward prayers?
> I say unto you, see that your souls live
> A deeper life than theirs."

The co-operative movement is delivering over the shaping of the rural life of Ireland, and the building up of its rural civilisation, into the hands of Irish farmers. The old order of things has left Ireland unlovely. But if we do not passionately strive to build it better, better for the men, for the women, for the children, of what worth are we? We continually come across the phrase "the dull Saxon" in our Irish papers; it crops up in the speeches of our public orators, but it was an English poet who said :—

> "I will not cease from mental fight,
> Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land."

And it was the last great poet England has produced,

who had so much hope for humanity in his country that in his latest song he could mix earth with heaven, and say that to human eyes—

> "Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
> Hung betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross"

Shall we think more meanly of the future of Ireland than these "dull Saxons" think of the future of their island? Shall we be content with humble crumbs fallen from the table of life and sit like beggars waiting only for what the commonwealth can do for us, leaving all high hopes and aims to our rulers, whether they be English or Irish? Every people get the kind of government they deserve. A nation can exhibit no greater political wisdom in the mass than it generates in its units. It is the pregnant idealism of the multitude which gives power to the makers of great nations, otherwise the prophets of civilisation are helpless as preachers in the desert and solitary places. So I have always preached self-help above all other kinds of help, knowing that if we strove passionately after this righteousness all other kinds of help would be at our service. So, too, I would waive aside the officious interferer in our co-operative affairs who would offer on behalf of the state to do for us what we should and could do far better ourselves. We can build up a rural civilisation in Ireland, shaping it to our heart's desires, warming it with life, but our rulers and officials can never be warmer than a stepfather and have no "large, divine, and comfortable words" for us; they tinker at the body when it is the soul which requires to be healed and made whole. The soul of Ireland has to be kindled, and it can be only kindled by the thought of great deeds and not by the hope of petty parsimonies or petty gains.

Now, great deeds are never done vicariously. They are done directly and personally. No country has grown to greatness mainly by the acts of some great ruler, but by the aggregate activities of all its people. Therefore, every Irish community should make its own ideals and should work for them. As great work can be done in a parish as in the legislative assemblies with a nation at gaze. Do people say: "It is easier to work well with a nation at gaze?" I answer that true greatness becomes the North Pole of humanity, and when it appears all the needles of Being point to it. You of the young generation, who have not yet lost the generous ardour of youth, believe it is as possible to do great work and make noble sacrifices and to roll the acceptable smoke of offering to Heaven by your work in an Irish parish, as in any city in the world. Like the Greek architects who saw in their dreams hills crowned with white marble-pillared palaces and images of beauty until these rose up in actuality, so should you, not forgetting national ideals, still most of all set before yourselves the ideal of your own neighbourhood. How can you speak of working for all Ireland, which you have not seen, if you do not labour and dream for the Ireland before your eyes, which you see as you look out of your own door in the morning and on which you walk up and down through the day?

"What dream shall we dream, or what labour shall we undertake?" you may ask, and it is right that those who exhort should be asked in what manner and how precisely they would have the listener act or think. I answer: the first thing to do is to create and realise the feeling for the community and break up the evil and petty isolation of man from man. This can be done by every kind of co-operative effort where combined action is better than individual action. The parish cannot take care of the child as well as the parents, but you will

find in most of the labours of life combined action is more fruitful than individual action. Some of you have found this out in many branches of agriculture, of which your dairying, agricultural, credit, poultry, and flax societies are witness. Some of you have combined to manufacture; some to buy in common; some to sell in common. Some of you have the common ownership of thousands of pounds worth of expensive machinery. Some of you have carried the idea of co-operation for economic ends further, and have used the power which combination gives you to erect village halls and to have libraries of books, the windows through which the life and wonder and power of humanity can be seen. Some of you have light-heartedly, in the growing sympathy of unity, revived the dances and songs and sports which are the right relaxation of labour. Some Irishwomen here and there have heard beyond the four walls in which so much of their lives are spent the music of a new day, and have started out to help and inspire the men and be good comrades to them; and, calling themselves United Irishwomen, they have joined, as the men have joined, to help their sisters who are in economic servitude, or who suffer from the ignorance and indifference to their special needs in life which pervade the administration of local government. We cannot build up a rural civilisation in Ireland without the aid of Irish women. It will help life little if we have methods of the twentieth century in the fields and those of the fifth century in the home. A great writer said: "Woman is the last thing man will civilise." If a woman had written on that subject she would have said: "Woman is the last thing man thinks about when he is building up his empires." It is true that the consciousness of women has been always centred too close to the dark and obscure roots of the Tree of Life, while men have branched out more to the sun and wind, and to-day the

starved soul of womanhood is crying out over the world for an intellectual life and for more chance of earning a living. If Ireland will not listen to this cry, its daughters will go on slipping silently away to other countries, as they have been doing—all the best of them, all the bravest, all those most mentally alive, all those who would have made the best wives and the best mothers—and they will leave at home the timid, the stupid, and the dull to help in the deterioration of the race and to breed sons as sluggish as themselves. In the new world women have taken an important part in the work of the National Grange, the greatest agency in bettering the economic and social conditions of the agricultural population in the States. In Ireland the women must be welcomed into the work of building up a rural civilisation and be aided by men in the promotion of those industries which which women have been immemorially associated. We should not want to see women separated from the activities and ideals and aspirations of men. We should want to see them working together and in harmony. If the women carry on their work in connection with the associations by which men earn their living they will have a greater certainty of permanence. I have seen too many little industries and little associations of women workers spring up and perish in Ireland, which depended on the efforts of some one person who had not drunk of the elixir of immortal youth, and could not always continue the work she started, and I have come to the conclusion that the women's organisations must be connected with the men's organisations, must use their premises, village halls and rooms for women's meetings. I do not believe women's work can be promoted so well in any other way. Men and women have been companions in the world from the dawn of time. I do not know where they are journeying to, but I believe they will never get to the Delectable

City if they journey apart from each other, and do not share each others burdens.

Working so, we create the conditions in which the spirit of the community grows strong. We create the true communal idea which the socialists miss in their dream of a vast amalgamation of whole nationalities in one great commercial undertaking. The true idea of the clan or commune or tribe is to have in it so many people as will give it strength and importance and so few people that a personal tie may be established between them. Humanity has always grouped itself instinctively in this way. It did so in the ancient clans and rural communes, and it does so in the parishes and co-operative associations. If they were larger they would lose the sense of unity. If they were smaller they would be too feeble for effectual work and could not take over the affairs of their district. A rural commune or co-operative community ought to have to a large extent the character of a nation. It should manufacture for its members all things which it profitably can manufacture for them, employing its own workmen, carpenters, bootmakers, makers and menders of farming equipment, saddlery, harness, &c. It should aim at feeding its members and their families cheaply and well, as far as possible out of the meat and grain produced in the district. It should have a mill to grind their grain, a creamery to manufacture their butter, or where certain enterprises like a bacon factory are too great for it, it should unite with other co-operative communities to furnish out such an enterprise. It should sell for the members their produce and buy for them their requirements, and hold for them labour saving machinery. It should put aside a certain portion of its profits every year for the creation of halls, libraries, places for recreation and games, and it should pursue this plan steadily with the purpose of giving its members every

social and educational advantage which the civilisation of their time affords. It should have its councils or village parliaments, where improvements and new ventures could be discussed. Such a community would soon generate a passionate devotion to its own ideals and interests among the members who would feel how their fortunes rose with the fortunes of the associations of which they were all members. It would kindle and quicken the intellect of every person in the community. It would create the atmosphere in which national genius would emerge and find opportunities for its activity. The clan ought to be the antechamber of the nation and the training ground for its statesmen. What opportunity leadership in the councils of such a rural community would give to the best minds! The man of social genius at present finds an unorganised community, and he does not know how to affect his fellow citizens. A man might easily despair of affecting the destinies of a nation of forty million people, but yet start with eagerness to build up a kingdom of the size of Sligo, and shape it nearer to the heart's desire. The organisation of the rural population of Ireland in co-operative associations will provide the instrument ready to the hand of the social reformer. Some associations will be more dowered with ability than others, but one will learn from another, and a vast network of living, progressive organisations will cover rural Ireland, democratic in constitution and governed by the aristocracy of intellect and character.

Such associations would have great economic advantages in that they would be self-reliant and self-contained, and would be less subject to fluctuation in their prosperity brought about by national disasters and commercial crises than the present unorganised rural communities are. They would have all their business under local control; and, aiming at feeding, clothing, and manufacturing

locally from local resources as far as possible, the slumps in foreign trade, the shortage in supplies, the dislocations of commerce would affect them but little. They would make the community wealthier. Every step towards this organisation already taken in Ireland has brought with it increased prosperity and the towns benefit by increased purchasing power on the part of these rural associations. New arts and industries would spring up under the ægis of the local associations. Here we should find the weaving of rugs, there the manufacture of toys, elsewhere the women would be engaged in embroidery or lace making, and, perhaps, everywhere we might get a revival of the old local industry of weaving homespuns. We are dreaming of nothing impossible, nothing which has not been done somewhere already, nothing which we could not do here in Ireland. True it cannot be done all at once, but if we get the idea clearly in our minds of the building up of a rural civilization in Ireland, we can labour at it with the grand persistence of mediæval burghers in their little towns, where one generation laid down the foundations of a great cathedral and saw only in hope and faith the gorgeous glooms over altar and sanctuary, and the blaze and flame of stained glass, where apostles, prophets, and angelic presences were pictured in fire, and the next generation raised high the walls, and the third generation only saw the realisation of what their grandsires had dreamed. We in Ireland should not live only from day to day, for the day only, like the beasts in the field, but should think of where all this long cavalcade of the Gael is tending and how and in what manner their tents will be pitched in the evening of their generation. A national purpose is the most unconquerable and victorious of all things on earth. It can raise up Babylons from the sands of the desert and make imperial civilizations spring from out a score of huts, and after it has wrought its will it can

leave monuments that seem as everlasting a portion of nature as the rocks. The Pyramids and the Sphinx in the sands of Egypt have seemed to humanity for centuries as much a portion of nature as Erigal or Benbulben or Slieve Gullion have seemed a portion of nature to our eyes in Ireland.

We must have some purpose or plan in building up an Irish civilization. No artist takes up his paints and brushes and begins to work on his canvas without a clear idea burning in his brain of what he has to do, else were his work all smudges. Does anyone think that out of all these little cabins and farm-houses dotting the green of Ireland there will come harmonious effort to a common end without organisation and set purpose? The idea and plan of a great rural civilization must shine like a burning lamp in the imagination of the youth of Ireland, or we shall only be at cross-purposes and end in little futilities. We are very fond in Ireland of talking of Ireland a nation. The word "nation" has a kind of satisfying sound, but I am afraid it is an empty word with no rich significance to most who use it. The word "laboratory" has as fine a sound, but only the practical scientist has a true conception of what may take place there, what roar of strange forces, what mingling of subtle elements, what mystery and magnificence in atomic life. The word without the idea is like the purse without the coin, the skull without the soul, or any other sham or empty deceit. Nations are not built so by the repetition of words, but by the organising of intellectual forces. If any of my readers would like to know what kind of thought goes to the building up of a great nation, let them read the life of Alexander Hamilton, by Oliver, which can be obtained for a shilling. To this extraordinary man the United States owe their constitution, almost their existence. To him far more than to Washington the idea, plan, shape

of all that marvellous dominion owes its origin and character. He seemed to hold in his brain, while America was yet a group of half barbaric settlements, the idea of what it might become. He laid down the plans, the constitution, the foreign policy, the trade policy, the relation of State to State, and it is only within the last few years almost that America has realised that she had in Hamilton as upreme political and social intelligence, the true fountain head of what she has since become.

We have not half a continent to deal with, but size matters nothing. The Russian Empire, which covers half Europe, and stretches over the Ural Mountains to the Pacific, would weigh light as a feather in the balance if we compare its services to humanity with those of the little State of Attica, which was no larger than Tipperary. Every State which has come to command the admiration of the world has had clearly conceived ideals which it realised before it went the way which all empires, even the greatest must go, becoming finally a legend, a fable, or a symbol. We have to lay down the foundations of a new social order in Ireland, and, if the possibilities of it are realised, our thousand years of sorrow and darkness may be followed by as long a cycle of happy effort and ever-growing prosperity. We shall want all these plans whether we are ruled from Westminster or College Green. Without an imaginative conception of what kind of civilisation we wish to create, the best government from either quarter will never avail to lift us beyond national mediocrity. I write for those who have joined the ranks of co-operators without perhaps realising all that the movement meant, or all that it tended to. Because we hold in our hearts and keep holy there the vision of a great future, we have fought passionately for the entire freedom of our movement from external control, lest the meddling of politicians or official persons without

any inspiration should deflect for some petty purpose or official gratification the strength of that current which was flowing and gathering strength unto the realisation of great ideals. Every country has its proportion of little souls which could find ample room on a threepenny bit and be majestically housed in a thimble who follow out some little minute practice in an ecstacy of self-satisfaction, seeking some little job which is the El Dorado of their desires as if there were nought else, as if humanity were not going from the Great Deep to the Great Deep of Deity, with wind and water, fire and earth, stars and sun, lordly companions for him on his path to a divine destiny. We have our share of these in Ireland in high and low places, but I do not write for them. This sermon of a layman is for those who are working at laying deep the foundations of a new social order, to hearten them with some thought of what their labour may bring to Ireland. I welcome to this work the United Irishwomen. As one of their poetesses has said in a beautiful song, the services of women to Ireland in the past have been the services of mourners to the stricken. But for to-day and to-morrow we need hope and courage and gaiety, and I repeat for them the last passionate words of her verse:

> "Rise to your feet, O daughters, rise,
> Our mother still is young and fair,
> Let the world look into your eyes
> And see her beauty shining there.
> Grant of that beauty but one ray,
> Heroes shall leap from every hill:
> To-day shall be as yesterday,
> The red blood burns in Ireland still."

THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN IRELAND. By Philip Wilson. Demy 8vo. 12s. 6d. net. (*Prospectus on application*)

The Contents are :—The Lordship of Ireland, The Geraldine Revolt, The Irish Church, The Geraldine League, The Kingdom of Ireland, The Reformation, The Plantation of Leix and Offaly. The book is very fully indexed.

"Mr. Wilson is to be congratulated on the incisive style in which he sets forth his knowledge, as well as upon the mass and detail of the knowledge he has brought together in this book. Mr. Wilson chronicles the disorganization of Tudor Ireland with an able and vivid pen; he is a tireless student of original sources. . . . . Mr. Wilson's book is . . . a forceful, cleverly written, and original piece of work—which must find a place on the shelves of all serious students of Irish history."—*The Bookman.*

"To the making of (Mr. Philip Wilson's book) there has been applied research among original documents, a sane and temperate yet courageous judgment, and a style which has dignity without heaviness. It is no rehash of the work of others, though that work has of course been absorbed, but is a painstaking original study.

Messrs. Maunsel have produced the book worthily—good paper, bold type, finished workmanship: London could not have done better than Dublin, and the firm may be congratulated on their enterprise."—*Birmingham Post.*

"We have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Wilson's book is one of great value—a fair and judicial statement of the facts of the English re-conquest of Ireland."—*Athenæum.*

"In welcoming this book we welcome its author, who is virtually a new historian. . . . The history of Ireland in the author's view 'affords an interest not altogether dissimilar from that which the physician derives from the most painful and complex cases of bodily disease.' This sentence strikes the note of treatment. Mr. Wilson writes with the calm and patience of the inquirer into causes and effects, and at the same time with a sympathy for the sufferers equally consistent with the character assigned to himself in the comparison."—*The Daily News.*

Recent Publications.

CO-OPERATION AND NATIONALITY,

A Guide to Rural Reformers from this Generation to the Next. By George W. Russell (Æ). Paper. 1s. net. Bds. 1s. 6d. net.

"A picture painted with an unflagging spirit and sureness and good humour of rural Ireland as it is to-day; it is a contribution of extraordinary vivacity and knowledge and commonsense to the world-wide problem of re-building the life and business of the countryside; it is an epitome of that sane, social philosophy which is for the individual as against the State, and for the co-operative group as against the isolated unit. . . . Such, in the most meagre outline, is 'Æ'S' thesis. But for the freshness, the wit, the passion with which it is expounded, for the practicality and idealism which unite to inform it, and for the spacious philosophy and vigorous animation of style with which it is adorned you must go to the book itself."—Sydney Brooks in *The Daily Chronicle.*

"Since the tentative appeal of Molyneux's 'Case of Ireland,' and the horrible irony of the 'Examination of Certain Abuses,' the pamphlet literature of Irish degradation has been considerable in amount, and often it has been distinguished. But never surely can the ideal of an Irish patriot have been more vigorously or more nobly bodied forth than in Mr. G. W. Russell's great little book. The fabric of New Ireland long since found its architect in Sir Horace Plunkett; now mutuality has gained both prophet and poet in Æ; and there will be many of us English folk who have searched in vain through the literature of the Gaelic revival for the glimpse of a vision and the promise of a vigour to fulfil it; and who will now, at last, be more than satisfied with this beautiful witness to the real craftsmen of the Western World. The work has been going forward and there has been little time for singing, but at last the song is here and it is good. Ireland will be built."—*The Eye Witness.*